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Adoption of the report of the sixty-sixth session of the Executive Committee

Report of the sixty-sixth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Report of the Executive Committee

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I. Introduction

A. Opening of the session

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its sixty-sixth plenary session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, from 5-9 October 2015. It was opened by the Chairperson, Ambassador Pedro Comissário (Mozambique).

B. Representation

2. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cyprus, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Holy See, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen and Zambia.

3. The Governments of the following States were present as observers:

Albania, Angola, Bahamas, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Gabon, Gambia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Iraq, Kuwait, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.

4. The European Union was represented as an observer.

5. Also present were the following intergovernmental organizations and other entities:

African Union, Economic Community of Central African States, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, International Organization for Migration, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

6. The United Nations system was represented as follows:

Food and Agriculture Organization, International Telecommunication Union, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Population Fund, World Bank Group and World Health Organization.

7. Some 40 non-governmental organizations were in attendance.

C. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

8. The Executive Committee adopted by consensus the following agenda (A/AC.96/LXVI/1):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Statement by the High Commissioner and general debate.
4. High-level segment on the Afghan refugee situation.
5. Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee:
   (a) International protection;
   (b) Programme budgets, management, financial control and administrative oversight.
6. Consideration of reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation.
7. Consideration and adoption of the biennial programme budget 2016-2017.
8. Review of the annual consultations with non-governmental organizations.
9. Other statements.
10. Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2016.
11. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee.
12. Election of officers.
13. Any other business.
14. Adoption of the report of the sixty-sixth session of the Executive Committee
15. Closing of the session

D. Election of officers for the sixty-seventh session

9. Under Rule 10 of its Rules of Procedure, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation, to serve the Committee from the day immediately following their election to the end of the last day of the following annual plenary session:

Chairperson: H.E. Ambassador Mr. Carsten STAUR (Denmark)

Vice-Chairperson: H.E. Ambassador Ms. Rosemary McCARNEY (Canada)

Vice-Chairperson: [Deferred][1]

Rapporteur: Ms. Yanit Tefera HABTEMARIAM (Ethiopia)

[1] As discussions on the nomination of a second vice-chairperson from within the Asia group were on-going, it was decided that as soon as a candidate had been selected, the name of the candidate would be circulated to the members of the Executive Committee for election by silent procedure.

II. Work of the sixty-sixth session

10. A summary of the general debate, delivered by the Chairperson, is contained in annex I.

11. The sixty-sixth session included a high-level segment on the Afghan refugee situation. A statement adopted by the Executive Committee at the end of the high-level segment is contained in annex II.

12. The High Commissioner's statements delivered during the session, including for the high-level segment, and summary records of each meeting are available on UNHCR's website http://www.unhcr.org/excom.

III. Decisions of the Executive Committee

A. General decision on administrative, financial and programme matters

13. *The Executive Committee*

(a) *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fifth session, approved a revised budget for 2015 covering total requirements of $6,234,449,630; *notes* the reduction in the annual programme budget of the Middle East and North Africa region of $158,468,941; *notes* that the additional needs under supplementary budgets in 2015 amount to $1,017,162,099; *approves* the total revised requirements for 2015 amounting to $7,093,142,788; and *authorizes* the High Commissioner, within these total appropriations, to effect adjustments in regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters budgets;

(b) *Confirms* that the activities proposed in the biennial programme budget for the years 2016-2017, as set out in document A/AC.96/1147, are consistent with the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner (A/RES/428 (V)); the High Commissioner's other functions as recognized, promoted or requested by the General Assembly, the Security Council, or the Secretary-General; and the relevant provisions of the financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/AC.96/503/Rev.10);

(c) *Approves* the programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under the proposed 2016-2017 Biennial budget, as set out in document A/AC.96/1147 and amounting to $6,546,288,297 and $6,408,521,723 for 2016 and 2017 respectively, including the United Nations regular budget contribution towards headquarters costs, the reserves, and the Junior Professional Officer programme; and *authorizes* the High Commissioner, within this total appropriation, to effect adjustments in regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters budgets;

(d) *Takes note* of the financial statements for the year 2014 as contained in the Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the financial report and audited financial statements of the voluntary funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 2014 (A/AC.96/1146) and the Report by the High Commissioner on key issues and measures taken in response to the recommendations in the Report of the Board of Auditors (A/AC.96/1146/Add.1), as well as the Report by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on UNHCR's biennial programme budget for 2016-2017 (A/AC.96/1147/Add.1) and various reports of the High Commissioner related to oversight activities (A/AC.96/1148

and A/AC.96/1149); and *requests* to be kept regularly informed on the measures taken to address the recommendations and the observations raised in these various oversight documents;

(e) *Requests* the High Commissioner, within the resources available, to respond flexibly and efficiently to the needs indicated under the biennial programme budget for the years 2016-2017, and *authorizes* him, in the case of additional emergency needs that cannot be met fully from the operational reserve, to create supplementary budgets and issue special appeals under all pillars, with such adjustments being reported to the subsequent Standing Committee meeting for consideration;

(f) *Acknowledges* with appreciation the burden that continues to be shouldered by developing and least developed countries hosting refugees; and *urges* Member States to recognize this valuable contribution to the protection of refugees and to participate in efforts to promote durable solutions; and

(g) *Urges* Member States, in light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, and in parallel with the long-standing and substantial support provided by refugee hosting countries, to respond generously and in a spirit of solidarity to his appeal for resources to meet in full the 2016-2017 biennial programme budget, and to ensure that the Office is resourced in a timely and predictable manner, while keeping "earmarking" to a minimum level.

B. Decision on the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2016

14. *The Executive Committee,*

Having reviewed the issues before it at its sixty-sixth session, and bearing in mind the decisions adopted at that session,

(a) *Decides* to convene three formal meetings of the Standing Committee in 2016, to be held in March, June and September;

(b) *Reaffirms* its decision on the framework for the Standing Committee's programme of work (A/AC.96/1003 paragraph 25, sub-paragraph 2(c)); authorizes the Standing Committee to add and delete items, if appropriate, to this framework for its meetings in 2016; and requests member States to meet in December 2015 to prepare a detailed work plan for formal adoption by the Standing Committee at its first meeting in 2016;

(c) *Calls* upon its members to ensure that debate during sessions of the Executive Committee and its Standing Committee is of a substantive and interactive nature; that it remains purely humanitarian and non-political in nature; and that it yields practical guidance and clear advice to the High Commissioner, in keeping with the Committee's statutory functions;

(d) *Calls* upon the Office of the High Commissioner to be explicit and analytical in its reports and presentations to the Committee and to submit documentation in a timely manner; and

(e) *Further* requests the Standing Committee to report on its work to the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee.

C. Decision on observer participation in meetings of the Standing Committee in 2015-2016

15. *The Executive Committee,*

(a) *Approves* applications by the following Government observer delegations for participation in meetings of the Standing Committee from October 2015 to October 2016:

Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Panama and Paraguay;

(b) *Authorizes* the Standing Committee to decide upon any additional applications from Government observer delegations to participate in its meetings during the aforementioned period;

(c) *Approves* the following list of intergovernmental and international organizations to be invited by the High Commissioner to participate as observers in relevant meetings of its Standing Committee from October 2015 to October 2016:

United Nations specialized agencies, departments, funds and programmes; African Union; Council of Europe; East African Community; Economic Community of Central African States; Economic Community of West African States; European Union; Executive Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States; Intergovernmental Authority on Development; International Centre for Migration Policy Development; International Committee of the Red Cross; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Organization for Migration; League of Arab States; Organization of Eastern Caribbean States; International Organisation of La Francophonie; Organization of Islamic Cooperation; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; Southern African Development Community; and Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

D. Decision on the provisional agenda of the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee

16. *The Executive Committee,*

Recalling its decision on working methods adopted at its fifty-fifth plenary session (A/AC.96/1003 paragraph 25);

Decides to adopt as the provisional agenda for the sixty-seventh session of the Executive Committee the standard model contained in sub-paragraph 1(f) of the above-mentioned decision.

E. Decision on a multi-year workplan for Executive Committee conclusions

17. *The Executive Committee,*

Reaffirming the important role of the Executive Committee in forging consensus on vital international protection issues, standards, policies and practices, as well as the value of Executive Committee Conclusions as guidance for States, UNHCR, non-governmental organizations and other actors in providing protection, assistance and solutions for refugees and other persons of concern;

Having considered the potential contribution of future Executive Committee Conclusions on a range of themes;

Welcoming the proposals received from Member States and UNHCR;

Recognizing the usefulness of an indicative work plan of identified themes for the two year period ahead, and that such a workplan would enable the Committee and UNHCR to better plan for relevant conference room papers, Informal Consultative Meetings, and briefings; and

Underscoring that the Committee retains flexibility to adjust and modify the workplan, in particular to consider additional themes as conditions may warrant, as well as to update the workplan annually on a rolling basis,

(a) *Agrees* to the following work plan of themes for consideration and development in 2016 and 2017:

- International cooperation from a protection and solutions perspective (2016)
- Youth (2016)
- Resilience and self-reliance from a protection and solutions perspective (2017)
- Machine readable travel documents (2017)

(b) *Requests* the Executive Committee Bureau and UNHCR to take this work plan into account in preparing a draft programme of work for the Committee's consideration during the December Planning Meeting.

Annex I

Chairperson's summary of the general debate

The Chairperson summarized the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the Executive Committee as follows:

"The High Commissioner opened the general debate by noting the significant increase in the numbers of displaced persons during his tenure – from 38 million in 2005 to over 60 million in 2015. He underscored occasions for progress, in spite of the succession of emergencies and sobering gaps in funding. About 125 delegations contributed to our debate, sharing your experiences, analyses and recommendations. This compares to some 80 delegations who took the floor in 2014.

Many of you recalled that more people are displaced today than at any time since the World War II era, with their ever increasing numbers compounded by the dwindling availability of durable solutions. The "mega-crises" in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq featured heavily in our discussions, although you cautioned us not to forget protracted situations such as Afghanistan and Somalia. You welcomed the high-level segment on the Afghan refugee situation in this respect. The situation in Europe was also highlighted, as you encouraged European States to strengthen their common response.

You echoed the High Commissioner's concerns that the humanitarian system is "financially broke", while honouring the generosity of donors. Particular attention was drawn to the decreasing funding for situations in Africa. You issued strong appeals for donors to increase their contributions, including through unearmarked funding, as well as for efforts to attract new donor countries and the private sector. You joined the High Commissioner's call to rethink the financing of humanitarian operations; in particular, the need to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development interventions.

An overarching theme of the general debate was our collective responsibility to ensure that international protection is provided to those who need it. Many of you remembered times when your own citizens benefitted from asylum and expressed profound gratitude to host States, particularly those who host large numbers at great cost. You urged the international community to match the solidarity, hospitality and compassion of host communities with international burden-sharing. As one delegation reminded us, no country can face the challenges of dealing with large numbers of arrivals on their own.

Many of you encouraged States to maintain more open borders, and expressed support for UNHCR's work on alternatives to detention. Efforts to prevent and improve responses to sexual and gender-based violence were highlighted. In addition, you drew attention to comprehensive plans to address mixed movements, as well as human trafficking and smuggling, with particular mention of the dangerous maritime routes that are claiming so many lives. I was heartened to hear many States report progress in developing or implementing regional protection frameworks, notably the Brazil Plan of Action, as well as efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness. It is also encouraging that several States have strengthened their asylum procedures and laws, improved reception arrangements, and begun to issue machine-readable convention travel documents. UNHCR's efforts to foster tolerance and respect for diversity were welcomed, especially in light of the human consequences of discrimination and xenophobia.

We all share the High Commissioner's preoccupation with the growing elusiveness of durable solutions. The increase in resettlement places by some States was acknowledged as an important manifestation of global participation in resolving refugee challenges, and further efforts on resettlement were called for. We also heard about some of your generous

local integration policies; and many delegations welcomed cooperative arrangements to facilitate voluntary return and reintegration. Nonetheless, more remains to be done to achieve solutions, which present both political and developmental challenges. Particular mention was made of the importance of targeted initiatives, such as the "Solutions strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries" and the "High Commissioner's global initiative on Somali refugees", which require the urgent attention and support of the international community. Pending the availability of durable solutions, you have emphasized efforts to strengthen the resilience of refugees and their host communities, including through education, self-reliance and cash-based assistance. Several delegations noted that they include refugees in national education and health systems, as well as in national development plans. As one delegation stated, refugees can contribute to economic and social development in their countries of asylum if given the opportunity. They can be opportunities rather than burdens.

We were reminded of the need to respond to the causes of humanitarian crises, not just their consequences. You widely welcomed the theme of root causes for this year's High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges. As we often affirm, solutions to humanitarian crises are necessarily political. The international community must encourage dialogue to resolve disputes through non-violent means, develop economies and build lasting and enduring peace. Some of you recalled that the causes of migration and displacement include not only violence, persecution, discrimination or other human rights violations, but also a lack of opportunities for employment and education, or hope for improving one's quality of life.

Echoing the High Commissioner, you recalled that humanitarian problems are too complicated and long-term to be addressed by the humanitarian sector alone. You made clear that global mobility belongs at the heart of the international community's agenda, including development agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals. The World Humanitarian Summit was mentioned by many delegations, noting that UNHCR's protection- and rights-based approach should serve as a model for humanitarian action. Equally, displacement must figure in discussions on climate change, and the Nansen Initiative provides an important contribution in that regard.

The High Commissioner noted in his remarks the attempts to dispute the validity of the 1951 Convention or to dilute UNHCR's accountability for protecting refugees. It was therefore heartening to hear so many of you reaffirm your common commitment to the mandate and values of the Office. UNHCR must indeed remain "front and centre" in global efforts to protect the world's most vulnerable people. You urged UNHCR to continue to enhance cooperation, coordination and strategic partnerships.

You reminded us that refugees are simply ordinary people living through extraordinary times. Our collective response to refugees can and should reflect this fact; all the more so as basic humanitarian values, including the principles of non-refoulement and assistance to those in need, span all cultures and all religions. As the High Commissioner stated: "The acts of kindness of millions of individuals in host communities across the world continue to show us, day after day, that tolerance and solidarity run deeply in the heart of humanity." Let us continue to build on this tolerance and solidarity to ensure that the displaced - and those who host them - receive the support that they require in these turbulent times.

I join you in expressing my appreciation for the High Commissioner's leadership and vision over the past decade, including his commitment to developing effective and innovative ways of delivering protection and assistance. He will be hard to replace and will be deeply missed by all of us.

Thank you."

Annex II

Statement of the Executive Committee on the Afghan refugee situation

At the end of the high-level segment on the Afghan refugee situation, the Executive Committee adopted a statement as follows:

"We, Member States of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, on the occasion of a high-level segment on the Afghan refugee situation, wish to emphasize the need to resolutely address one of the longest protracted refugee situations. Despite the multitude of complex humanitarian crises facing the international community today, it is imperative that all efforts be made to find and implement solutions for Afghan refugees, who have sought refuge outside their country for over 35 years, in light of the renewed dialogue and partnership among governments in the region and commitment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to support phased and voluntary return and reintegration.

We are deeply grateful for the video presentation by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and for the presentations by the ministers of the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. Despite the voluntary return of 5.8 million Afghan refugees since 2002, there remain more than 2.6 million Afghan refugees in the neighbouring countries of the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan.

The renewed commitment of the Afghan Government of National Unity in making voluntary repatriation and reintegration of its citizens among its highest national priorities presents a unique opportunity to address this protracted situation. While international support has been generous, solutions for the returnees and remaining Afghan refugees will be elusive without lasting peace, security, and development. Returning refugees are vital to foster nation building and the reconstruction of their country, for which a conducive environment needs to be created. The voluntary return of Afghan refugees in safety and dignity should be facilitated along with their sustainable reintegration. We, therefore, appreciate the commitment by the Government of Afghanistan to include them in the national development planning and prioritization processes.

We highly commend the exemplary generosity and hospitality of the people and Governments of the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan in hosting Afghan refugees. We recognize the profound impact of the protracted refugee situation on host communities, economies, services, infrastructure, environment and security. Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration may pose specific challenges such as access to land, livelihood opportunities and provision of basic amenities for which the international community must play its due role and provide urgently needed assistance and financial support.

We reaffirm our support for the Solutions Strategy for the Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries (SSAR), endorsed by the international community in 2012, which presents the framework to identify and implement lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region. We are strongly encouraged by the aligning of national plans for Afghan refugees, prioritising empowerment of women and youth, by the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, reflecting close dialogue and partnership.

We reaffirm the principles of international solidarity, responsibility and burden sharing and partnership, and are grateful for the commitments expressed by Member States, including resettlement countries, and the affirmations of support to the country of origin, the host countries and communities, UNHCR, other UN and relevant humanitarian and development actors and civil society working on behalf of Afghan refugees.

We call upon the international community to:

- Continue to equitably respect the principles of voluntary return in conditions of safety and dignity, recognizing that immediate return may not be possible to all parts of the country in light of ongoing insecurity affecting conditions for sustainable reintegration. The voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of the Afghan refugee population is one of the important elements to the overall stability and sustainable development of Afghanistan and the region;

- Support the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in its commitment to create the necessary conditions for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration in the country with emphasis on youth empowerment, education, livelihoods, social protection and infrastructure;

- Advocate inclusion into the Government of Afghanistan's development planning, the needs of all displaced Afghans, including refugees currently in neighbouring countries and outside the region;

- Implement lasting solutions for Afghan refugees within the framework of the SSAR through supporting concrete initiatives in the respective national project portfolios, and support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to implement the Enhanced Voluntary Return and Reintegration Package for Afghan Refugees (EVRRP) as an innovative way to enhance sustainable return and reintegration;

- Support the mutually aligned policies, strategies and plans of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran on voluntary repatriation and reintegration in the country of origin, as well as assistance and continued protection for refugees in host countries;

- Urge donors, development and humanitarian actors, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society to render their unequivocal support to enhancing reintegration and absorption capacity in the areas of return in Afghanistan, to promote broadening of the donor base, as well as to support refugees directly to improve their living conditions and host communities in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan;

- Promote the dialogue with the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR, as well as within the wider international community, to facilitate early voluntary return of Afghan refugees and their temporary management in host countries as part of Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR); and

- In the spirit of solidarity, open channels for solutions in third countries such as legal migration, enhanced resettlement and family reunification opportunities in third countries.

We express our gratitude to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for supporting the organization of the high-level segment on the Afghan refugee situation and reiterate the key role of UNHCR in this situation."